

\*\*\* NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA \*\*\*

For the week of October 6, 1997

This week, an overview of Internet clients and where to find them. Please, try to download them in moderation.

=\*=\*= MY CLIENTS RUNNETH OVER =\*=\*=

You just can't trust me to set my own limits. I'm like a kid in a candy store. My temptation is Internet clients. I can't download just one. If I do download one, the next thing I know I'm downloading a half dozen more. Sure, they clog my hard drive and suck bandwidth. But they make my computer do so many nifty things. I can't resist.

As addictions go, I suppose, this is relatively harmless. I mean, they don't have a Betty Ford clinic for compulsive downloaders of Internet tools. (Do they?) But there are just so many neat Internet tools out there. Let me explain.

Client is the generic name for any program that can send and receive information from the Internet. Your web browser -- Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer or whatever you use -- is a client. Web browsers can access many different sorts of information: web sites (naturally), gopher sites, FTP archives and so on. Other clients do more specific tasks. The electronic mail program that's build into CompuServe, it's a client too.

A client -- no matter what it does -- needs to send and receive information to and from another computer on the Internet. That web page you're viewing may come from a computer in Tulsa or Tonga. The e-mail that you read was stored on another machine until you were ready to grab it. The computer that a client gets information from is called a server. (You've probably heard that word before: web server, mail server, Usenet server and so on.)

Web browsers and e-mail readers are just the tip of the iceberg, though. Clients are available for many other tasks, some useful, some not. I suppose that's my problem -- too many interesting Internet tools, too little disk space to hold them all.

I'll show you what I mean. Point your web browser to Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications list at <http://cws.internet.com/> -- this site is a dangerously thorough list of Internet clients for Windows. There you'll find programs like WinWeather, which provides up-to-date weather reports; Personal Stock Monitor, a program that displays stock prices on the screen just like on TV; Internet Phone, which lets you talk with online friends in real time; RealPlayer, a client for receiving audio and video streams; and more.

Mac users have access to a bevy of cool clients, too, such as InCDius, an audio CD player that downloads artist and song information from the Net; WeatherTracker, another weather program; WhiteBoard, a collaboration tool; and Version Master, which finds out-of-date software on your Mac by comparing what's there to a list of the latest and greatest on the Net. One of my favorite sources for Macintosh Internet clients is Mac on the Net at <http://www.moxienet.com/macnet/>.

These tools exemplify the fact that the Internet isn't just for browsing the web.

There are an endless number of ways you can retrieve and share information via the Net. Some tools, like web browsers, can be used to get a wide variety of information. Others, like the personal stock ticker, have a much more narrow purpose.

You can download any of these clients and use them with your CompuServe account. You use them alongside the CompuServe software -- log in, then run the client of your choice. As long as you're logged into CompuServe, your Internet connection is ready to go. If your computer has enough memory, you can even have more than one client going at once.

Before you start filling your hard drive with oodles of clients, you should be aware of a caveat. Just about every Internet client will work just dandy with CompuServe. Except for electronic mail -- right now, CompuServe's e-mail is a closed system, so you can't use other electronic mail clients to send and receive e-mail. For now, the way to read and send e-mail is with the CompuServe software itself. (Actually... Even this caveat has a caveat. CompuServe is testing an improved version of its mail system that will allow use of other e-mail clients. You can join the test yourself -- GO MAILTEST. Since the system is still being perfected, I wouldn't recommend joining the mail test unless you're experienced with external e-mail software and willing to experiment with an unproven system.)

Yes, I'm a client junkie, and you should be too -- well, a little. You don't need to clog your hard drive with every Internet program under the sun, but you can use a few Internet tools to get useful information and have fun online. Check out the archives and see what's there for you.

=\*=\*= SITES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE =\*=\*=

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications list: <http://cws.internet.com/>

Mac on the Net: <http://www.moxienet.com/macnet/>

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That's all for this week. Next week -- dealing with those %\*#^%! compressed files.

The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet Community Forum -- GO INETCOM and look in the NetAnswers library.

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